



Media Contact

Kathy St. Clair
Director of Marketing & Communications
816.802.3426 (office) | 913.634.0268 (cell)
kstclair@kcai.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The H&R Block Artspace at the Kansas City Art Institute presents

Return the Gaze
February 8 – March 23, 2023

Jayson Musson: His History of Art
February 8 – June 17, 2023



Kansas City, Mo. (January 30, 2023)

The H&R Block Artspace at the Kansas City Art Institute (KCAI) is pleased to present two timely exhibitions that merge the historical with the contemporary to explore the oldest traditions of art and examine the ongoing shifts in the appreciation of art history.

An opening reception will be held at the Artspace on Wednesday, February 8, from 6:00-8:00 pm.

Return the Gaze explores the figurative impulse and considers the rising prominence of the Black figure in global contemporary art. The exhibition introduces exciting new work by eight artists, an emerging wave of figurative painters working in Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and the United States. Featured artists include Tizta Berhanu (Ethiopia), Cydne Jasmin Coleby (Bahamas), Shanique Emelife (Bahamas/United States), Arjan Martins (Brazil), Zanele Muholi (South Africa), Emma Odumade (Nigeria), Tajh Rust (United States), and Cinga Samson (South Africa).

Return the Gaze focuses on the resurgence of the figure in contemporary art by artists of color who are investigating traditional genres like portraiture, representational painting and landscape to reveal new possibilities and approaches to creating expanded and more inclusive narratives. Drawn from visionary, purpose-driven collections of contemporary art, these works evoke intimacy, kinship and family, community, memory, cultural symbols and traditions, landscape and place, and scenes of contemporary life and the Black experience.

Expanding upon these narratives, the artists in *Return the Gaze* mine the history of painting, activate the influence of photography and other technologies, respond to the cultural climate of the present moment as well as the African diaspora, and attract the thoughtful attention of collectors, curators, and collecting institutions.

From the local to the global, the renewed enthusiasm for figurative painting and its place at the core of contemporary art practice is reflected in some of the most adventurous private art collections. The Artspace is extremely grateful to the passionate collectors and lenders whose generous support of these artists makes this exhibition possible: Bill and Christy Gautreaux Collection, Kansas City, MO; the Lumpkin-Bocuzzi Family Collection of Contemporary Art, New York, NY; Collection of Glenn and Amanda Fuhrman Family, NY, Courtesy of the Flag Art Foundation; and White Cube Ltd, London. Special thanks to Owen Martin and Matt Wycoff, KCAI alumni, and Catherine Futter for their conversation, support and encouragement.

Return the Gaze is organized for the Artspace by Raechell Smith, Director & Curator, H&R Block Artspace at the Kansas City Art Institute.

Public Events

Opening reception

Wednesday, February 8

6:00–8:00 pm

About the H&R Block Artspace

Dedicated to artists, art, and ideas since 1999, the H&R Block Artspace at the Kansas City Art Institute presents innovative exhibitions, public programs, and commissioned projects to engage and inspire the next generation of artists, designers, and culture workers.

The Artspace receives support for its programs from the Missouri Arts Council – a state agency, H&R Block Foundation, The Stanley H. Durwood Foundation, the Jesse Howard Fund at KCAI, and from private contributions.



The Artspace is open and free to all. Public hours are Wednesday through Saturday, 12:00-5:00 p.m.

For more details about the Artspace's public programs and additional information, visit www.kcai.edu/artspace. To schedule a group visit, call 816-802-3571. Follow us on Instagram [@hrblockartspace](https://www.instagram.com/hrblockartspace) and on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/hrblockartspace/>.

About the Kansas City Art Institute

Founded in 1885, the Kansas City Art Institute is one of the oldest and most respected art and design colleges in the United States. Located at 4415 Warwick in Kansas City, Mo., KCAI is a premier private, fully accredited four-year college of art and design awarding the Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 13 majors. The mission of KCAI is to prepare students to transform the world creatively through art and design.

Image: Cinga Samson, *Umkhusana 1*, 2021, oil on canvas; courtesy of the artist and White Cube; photo courtesy of White Cube (Nina Lieska).

H&R Block Artspace at Kansas City Art Institute

16 East 43rd Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64111
Hours: Wednesday-Saturday, 12:00-5:00 p.m.
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